

"WE SHALL NEVER BE MOVED"

By JAY LOVESTONE

THE SOCIALIST N.E.C. LEANS TOWARD THE RIGHT

The entire complex of the confused and critical situation in the Socialist Party is being resolved—at a varied but steady pace. The Buffalo sessions of the National Executive Committee (March 22-24th) in their deliberations and decisions continued the march to the right which started on the morning after the convention adjourned last June in Detroit.

The Buffalo meeting was faced with the big problem of taking a firm hand to solve the ever-sharpening crisis in the ranks. In New York City, O Neal and Co. reverted to type and resorted to some of the measures taken by Hillquit, Waldman, Karlin and their ilk against the membership in 1919. On a wholesale scale old branches were reorganized, new branches were "organized," and private hearings were conducted to ferret out members accused or suspected of harboring the views of Marx and Lenin, views considered treasonable to the interests of the lawyers' legion running the New York State S.P. organization. The doors were slammed in the face of Y.P.S.L. members eligible and ready to join the Socialist Party. The doors of the New York office of the YPSL were jammed wide open, the organization records stolen, the files rifled, the office then padlocked securely, and the officers dispersed—all in the interest of making the S.P. "safe for democracy."

Encouraged by the sweeping victory it won in Boston, the Right wing, thru the NEW LEADER, turned a scorching incessant fire on the Revolutionary Policy Committee and in a measure even on the Centrists led by Norman Thomas. The latter enraged the New York Militants. They began to awake—and "indignate" morally. The majority of the NEC to whom they belonged was set in motion. Charges were preferred against the New York State Committee. The NEC, thereupon "referendumed" among its members a decision to have the N. Y. Executive Committee appear in Buffalo "in person or by proxy . . . to show cause why the New York charter should not be revoked and the state reorganized." Upon motion by Norman Thomas the NEC further voted to have "the Board of Directors of the New Leader be asked to appear in person or by proxy . . . at its Buffalo meeting to show cause why the paper should not be removed from the accredited list."

Here was every sign that Buffalo was to be somebody's Waterloo. Whose was it to be? The Right wing Old Guard's or the Centrists' would-be New Guard?

Another Upside Down Operation

Thruout the present controversy in the S.P. the New York State organization has been a towering fortress for the self-avowed right wing. The "Militants" were awake nights and dreaming days how to break it down, how to storm it. As has been shown, the rights did not wait for the Centrist dreams to come true but launched a powerful offensive. Led by O Neal and the inimitable Julius Gerber, this attack proved so withering that finally none other than Norman Thomas himself cast restraint to the wild winds and thus exploded in an appeal to the membership in New York.

" . . . In a frantic desire to keep a majority in the Central Committee at all costs, a faction in the Party has flouted all constitutional and democratic procedure. To submit to this is to complete the destruction of any idealistic and vigorous Socialism in New York . . .

"Certain it is that Socialists cannot advocate democracy in the world, and then in their own affairs, practice, methods worthy of the old parties in order to maintain power.

"I ask your support in order to save our Party. This be it remembered, is an issue independent of, and infinitely more important than any opinion you may have on the Declaration of Principles, or the United Front."

Given this eloquent and warm support the New York "Militants" saw their golden opportunity—at long last. Here was an opportunity of a lifetime knocking not only at their doors but in their very hearts. Cherished hopes coming true! For, doesn't the "Militant" group belong to the majority of the N.E.C.? Hasn't the Declaration of Principles, conceived and sponsored by the "Militants," won a majority in the national referendum? Besides, didn't they have the goods aplenty on the New York Right wing? What more could one ask for and have? What more could good, loyal Socialist Party office—aspirants have on their side than so much power and so much justice?

The NEC majority came up the hill of the Buffalo sessions and came down again so quickly that it is still dizzy with its own failure. The NEC majority, until recently led by Thomas, flopped ignominiously, came down like a crow in flight stuffed with the hot lead of a deadly accurate marksman. In the Buffalo battle both the "Militants" and the Rights had one and the same leader—Mayor Daniel Hoan of Milwaukee. Herein lies the reason for the substantial victory of the open reformists. And herein lies much of the reason for the smashing defeat gained by the covered reformists, that is, by the "Militant" leaders particularly from New York. Pondering this disastrous rout suffered by the Centrists, one cannot but say

with that venerable bard; "Ill-weaved ambition how much art thou shrunk!"

The charter of the Right wing New York State organization was not lifted. The New Leader was not taken off the accredited list. Nothing was given back to the YPSL. The "Militants' paper, "The Socialist Call," just born, was not even legitimized, let alone baptized as an "accredited" S.P. publication. It was put on sort of probation—if, but, however, when, in the meanwhile and such other little words meaning much too much, standing in the way.

The "Militants' disastrous defeat at and flight from Buffalo lacked even the faintest glamour of Napoleon's retreat from Moscow. This time not only was the army shattered but the dreams, the hopes, the aspirations as well. The bear skins sold in advance of the hunt (the promised jobs in the New York organization) cannot be delivered. The dreams of Friday night became the nightmares of Sunday night. It was a very much chastened, a much dispirited and dejected parade backward, in broken ranks. The most unkindly cut of all was the refusal of the NEC to give immediately to the "Socialist Call" the S.P. Blue Eagle. For this "General Johnson" Hoan, in his studied and skillful efforts to establish peace and law and order in the Party—at the expense of the Left and all those who even made the slightest pretense at not being hostile to the Left—was primarily responsible.

How It Happened

Of course, the battle was not waged without any shots being fired at the Right. Powers Hapgood put in a number of very good licks here. Comrade Hapgood really was the only effective opponent of the Rights. In this he was

generally supported by the silent assent of Franz Daniels, the representative of and spokesman for the Revolutionary Policy Committee on the NEC. The strategy of the Rights worked. The New York State Committee did not even put in an official appearance, though ordered to do so by the NEC. Ditto for the Board of the English edition of the Jewish Daily Forward, O Neal's New Leader. Algernon Lee appeared, sort of unofficially, for the accused, for the defense, and managed to put the accusers and the prosecutors on the spot. The NEC majority spokesmen, from

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE SOCIALIST PARTY?

Why was armed insurrection outlawed?
Where do the Militants stand?
What happened at the NEC meeting?
What is the Old Guard up to?
Does the future belong to the Yipsels?
Will there be a split?
What next for American socialism?

Lecture by

JAY LOVESTONE

Secretary, Communist Party (Opposition)

IRVING PLAZA

Irving Place & 15 Street

Wednesday, April 10th—8 P. M.

ADMISSION 15c

Questions and Discussion

HAPGOOD, DANIELS IN LAST DITCH FIGHT FOR THE LEFT

Norman Thomas up and down, were on the defensive thruout the sessions, taking blow after blow from the Right.

Dan Hoan labored feverishly before the sessions officially opened to postpone all consideration of the Coolidge motion to lift the charter of the New York State organization. But the exposure of the New York ravages precluded this. Hoan, Hoopes, and Graham then joined hands and in chorus pleaded that "the two factions should talk it over and iron out all their difficulties and preserve harmony." O Neal feigned objection, tho he surely must have seen the real import of Hoan's new maneuver. O Neal raved against any compromise with "the Bolshevik trend in the Party." A "peace committee" was selected. Thomas declined to serve and Allen, Hoan and Graham, (outwardly a majority for the "Militants") went to work. It did nothing and Hoan made a series of motions in behalf of himself. A futile debate followed. Hapgood insisted on learning how long the NEC was going "to continue as a nonentity" and lack guts. Krueger, the one-man brain trust of the "Militants", whirled like a potter's wheel. Nothing—nothing was the score. Coolidge, Hoan, Hoopes and Krueger were, upon the plea of Thomas, selected as a new committee to prepare a harmony plan.

After a while, the new committee returned to report. The loudest advocates of its plan were Krueger and Thomas. But the "new" plan was really the old one—Hoan's original proposals with an additional patch of the following material and stripe: If the New Leader refuses to change its policy towards opposing opinions and groups, then, the "Socialist Call," can continue its publica-

tion. Not exactly a warm and definite invitation to the "Militants" paper to continue and flourish! Not exactly an encouraging send-off.

And To Whom It Happened

In substance the "new" old report worked out by a committee fully controlled by the "Militants," as adopted, provides for: (1) No Communists or anyone "agreeing with the theory of armed insurrection" can join the Party. (2) The New York State Committee should issue a statement of loyalty to the Party. (3) Local, state, and national constitutions must be enforced. Let no one be fooled here. Loyalty is a rather expansive and flexible term and constitutions are convenient instruments in the hands of democratic socialist attorneys. Thru these provisions Waldman can drive a team of four mules with ease and grace. (4) YPSL members, eighteen years or over, prepared to abide by Party decisions, are to be admitted to membership. Gerber, O Neal, Waldman have insisted that this is exactly where they stand and what they want. (5) The YPSL must conform with the decisions of Local New York and has no appeal to the NEC of the YPSL. Under these conditions it is to be reinstated. Being armed with provision Number One, the Right Wing controlling the New York SP organization could not ask for more. "Jimmie" Gerber thus escaped without even a moral, let alone legal or organizational, rebuke. (6) Party papers and channels of expression are not to attack comrades publicly. (7) The New York State "squabbles" must be disposed of amicably and settled thru the democratic channels by the membership. How worthless these two provisions are is forcefully proven by Waldman's blast in the New York Times the very morning after the NEC sessions concluded. Waldman hits the nail on the head when he said on this occasion that "The NEC . . . is . . . weak and indecisive in its own policies."

Heavy Artillery Fire Against The Left

But against the Lefts, the Centrist leadership was really militant. Here the flounders against the O Neals and Waldmans were rather definite and tough. Here they knew where they were travelling. No sense of direction was lacking them now. They knew where they were going and they marched at a forced pace—to "purge" the SP of all revolutionary socialists and all those who might want to become revolutionary socialists. The blood of O Neal, Thomas, Hoan, and Hoopes turned into some infected jelly every time someone insinuated that the experience of the class struggle itself establishes the historical inevitability of the final stages of the conflict between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie assuming the character of an armed struggle.

The quiescence of Devere Allen's report provides that from now on any SP member or group of members taking a Marxian position on the historical role of armed insurrection "or similar methods" is to be expelled. Entertaining such views "shall be deemed incompatible with membership in the Socialist Party of the United States."

In the light of this categorical decision we wonder how much longer the Leftward-moving SP members in general, and the RPC members in particular, will continue to cherish the futile and costly illusion about winning the Socialist Party as such for revolutionary socialism. Surely the fateful flop of the "Militant," the Centrist NEC, should teach them the impossibility of capturing the Socialist Party machinery for Marxian Socialist principles, for revolutionary tactics in the class struggle. The S.P. as such "shall never be moved" towards revolutionary socialism. Buffalo should clinch this point.

And Now?

What next? The Right wing will continue to gain. Ideologically Hoan, Hoopes, and O Neal are of one cut without any difference even in verbal frills. In fundamental principles Thomas, Allen and Krueger (the "Big Three" of the "Militant" group) do not differ from O Neal and Waldman. They are all bound together by a common hatred of Communist principles, that is, of Marxian socialism, of revolutionary socialism. This is the common meeting ground of open reformists and camouflaged reformists, of outright opportunists and Centrists. The objective logic of this will lead Hoan and O Neal into the same camp organizationally. The lure and prospects of the 1936 election campaign will soften Thomas still more and lead him to extend a hand of harmony to the New York Rights. Here and there, of course, some individuals on both sides will fall by the wayside or even be sacrificed, but this general trend will be unmistakable. While the contradictions between the left and the right are insoluble within a single set of principles and a single party, yet the organization weakness of the left and the unprincipledness and gutlessness of the center make unlikely today a split in the S.P. of the magnitude and importance of the 1919 movement.

However, disintegration will continue to be rife in the Socialist Party. In fact, there are multiplying signs that the confusion and chaos will be aggravated and that the SP organization will pay a

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THINGS WE WANT TO KNOW.

COMMUNISM AND DOGMA

Comrade Wolfe is here answering a question sent in by an "intellectual" as part of a letter expressing the doubts that assail many of his group. The letter, entitled "Things We Want to Know," was reprinted in our issue of March 16. This question (No. 4 of that letter) is reprinted for the convenience of the reader. It reads as follows:

"Must I swallow your dogma whole, if I am accepted? I admire your ideals and your motives, but honestly you frequently remind me of a pack of religious fanatics. You surround every word of Marx and Lenin with the same aura that the priesthood instills in the words of Jesus. You confound your opponents by triumphantly shouting: 'But Marx said . . . ' or 'But Lenin held . . . ' And you know damned well you do. Your papers and magazines are full of examples. It sounds exactly like a revivalist sanctimoniously announcing that the cynic is confounded by 'the Word of God HIMSELF'. And somehow I doubt if either of your idols ever held himself up as omniscient or omnipotent. I admire them both too much to think they were that conceited. Are you going to expel me if I arise in meeting and sacrilegiously answer: 'I know Lenin said that—but I think he was wrong?'"

You are right about Marx and Lenin—neither of them ever set up to be omniscient or omnipotent. When Marx looked upon some of those calling themselves Marxists, he exclaimed: "I am no Marxist." He and Engels were never tired of declaring to their comrades-in-arms, "our theory is no dogma but a guide to action."

Marxism is not a creed to be memorized, a litany to be recited on state occasions, nor a universal key that unlocks all doors and solves all problems without the trouble of thought. It is a method to be mastered and applied in action. And it is an accumulated and accumulating body of knowledge acquired by the application of that method to the problems posed to contemporary man by nature and society.

As a method its core lies in the conception of life as something fluid, changing, in process, as a ceaseless transformation of all things, now slowly and gradually, now rapidly and abruptly, from what they were into what they will be next.

Further, Marxist method demands realism, concreteness, recognition of the infinite variety, the manifold complexity, the specific peculiarity and "sly trickiness" of every particular instance, concrete institution, specific moment, and actual problem. Surely there is no room for dogmatism, universal solve-alls, and sterile creed-reciting in such a method.

As a concrete body of knowledge, Marxism represents the accumulated and accumulating results of the application of that method to the analysis of the world in which we live, and especially, to society. Its method is a scientific method raised to the highest level that human thought and methodology have so far attained. Its accumulated and accumulating knowledge is providing a sociology or science of society, which is so much the science of society, that its opponents bend all their efforts to "proving" that no science of society is pos-

By BERTRAM D. WOLFE

sible, for they have nothing to offer in its place.

Yet even that accumulated body of knowledge is not static, fixed, unalterable. For is it not knowledge of a world in flux? Is it not changing and growing knowledge of a changing world, of a world which we seek to change further, and is it not acquired by a method that has the concept of change as the very heart of it? Surely, no room for dogmatism here!

Your suspicious attitude towards "quotations from a sacred text" is a healthy one. Thus when the Daily Worker writes as it did a short time ago: "Alexander Bittelman is writing a book in which he will prove by copious quotations from Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin that America will develop along a revolutionary path," the very announcement unconsciously condemns the book as rabbinical talmudism or priestly exegetics, as something utterly alien to the spirit and method of Marxism.

But so far your attitude is healthy only in a negative sense, healthy as a negative reaction to the religious use of

The ECONOMIC WEEK

The Federal Reserve Board report for the month of February indicates that production has fallen from an index of 91 to 89. The main impetus for the drop is the decrease in steel production.

Consumers' Guide (March 11, 1935) reports that farm prices are still 20 points below parity. And the wholesale prices of farm products are still 13% below their 1929 relation to industrial prices; with the farmers' standard of living 20% below the pre-war standard. At the same time, the food price rise continues—from December 18th to Feb. 12th, the prices have risen 6.7%. For a yearly computation, the figures show that prices on Feb. 12, 1935 were 12.6% higher than on Feb. 13, 1934. These figures clearly reveal the high prices for the consumers with no corresponding increase for the farmers at the point of production.

The February issue of the Monthly Labor Review releases the findings of a committee set up to investigate the conditions amongst the workers in the onion field of Ohio. It goes a long way towards explaining the strikes in this vicinity last summer. "The results of this investigation show that before the strike the customary hourly wage rate was 12½ cents and some adult workers were employed for only 10 cents an hour. Moreover, during the year ending August, 1934, the cash income from all sources of 53% of the 177 families covered by the survey was less than \$250, and 83% of the families had incomes of less than \$500 only 3% of the families canvassed had incomes of 1,000 dollars or more."

—ECONOMIST